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Report of the Executive Board of the United Nations Children's Fund on the work of its first regular session of 2012

(7-10 February 2012)*

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I. Organization of the session

A. Election of officers of the Executive Board

1. On 18 January 2012, the Executive Board elected as President H.E. Mr. John W. Ashe, Permanent Representative of Antigua and Barbuda to the United Nations; and as Vice-Presidents, H.E. Mrs. Byrganym Aitimova, Permanent Representative of Kazakhstan to the United Nations, H.E. Mr. Macharia Kamau, Permanent Representative of Kenya to the United Nations, Ms. Nina Nordström, Minister Counsellor at the Permanent Mission of Finland to the United Nations and Ms. Karin Kaup, Second Secretary at the Permanent Mission of Estonia to the United Nations.

B. Opening statements by the President and Executive Director

2. The President of the Executive Board welcomed the participants. He exhorted the Executive Board members to ensure that the work during this year provided valuable guidance to UNICEF in its efforts to improve the well-being of all children, leaving no child out. He noted that the work of the Board in 2012 would benefit from discussions and new thinking surrounding some of the main global and United Nations conferences and initiatives, including the process for the quadrennial comprehensive policy review (QCPR) of operational activities for development of the United Nations system, and planning for post-2015. Fundamental to these discussions was the issue of sustainable development, which he said, required "big picture" thinking, emphasizing equity and addressing some challenging issues shaping children's lives well into the future. He urged those present to work with Governments to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and impressed upon donors the strong need of UNICEF for contributions to regular resources.

3. In his opening remarks, the Executive Director highlighted several emergency operations supported by UNICEF, drawing attention to the dire conditions in the Horn of Africa and the nutrition crisis in the Sahel region.

4. The main theme of his remarks was innovation. This, he said, was critical to the strength of UNICEF, to the success of the equity strategy and to achieving greater results for children. Citing examples in each area, he noted that innovation was helping UNICEF to accelerate progress across the organization, in programmes, products, processes and partnerships. Examples ranged from the use of SMS technology, with the participation of children and youths, to the creation of innovative products to improve children's health, to the organization-wide implementation of VISION (Virtual Integrated System of Information).

5. He said that in 2011, UNICEF had focused much of its attention on equity, especially on ways to identify and overcome bottlenecks to progress. This focus entailed advocating equitable social-sector investment for children, working closely with the World Bank and International Monetary Fund.

6. One innovation that would command significant attention in 2012, he said, was the new monitoring framework of UNICEF, the Monitoring Results for Equity System (MoRES), formerly known as the "Cup". This tool to monitor collective results in overcoming bottlenecks, was intended for use by partners, including other United Nations organizations working to deliver as one.

7. He noted that innovations in partnerships were strongly supported by the National Committees for UNICEF, which were helping to harness financial and other kinds of contributions from corporations. In the public-private sphere, an important new public-private partnership was the Scaling Up Nutrition, or SUN. This movement aimed to increase global awareness and action on undernutrition and stunting of children. He said he was honoured that the Secretary-General had asked him to chair the lead group of SUN.

8. The Executive Director ended his remarks by focusing on the need to increase levels of regular (core) resources. It was essential for UNICEF to have this flexible funding in order to achieve continued good results. Though preliminary figures for 2011 indicated an 11 per cent increase in core resources revenue, UNICEF faced a deficit of about $60 million. While UNICEF would continue to curb expenses, donors were urged to increase their regular resources contributions so that the current level of expenditure on programmes could be maintained.

C. Adoption of the agenda

9. The Executive Board adopted the provisional annotated agenda, timetable and organization of work (E/ICEF/2012/1) for the session.

10. In accordance with rule 50.2 of the rules of procedure, the Secretary of the Executive Board announced that credentials had been submitted by 45 observer delegations, including one United Nations body, two intergovernmental organizations, four non-governmental organizations and eight National Committees for UNICEF.

II. Deliberations of the Executive Board

A. Annual report to the Economic and Social Council

11. The annual report to the Economic and Social Council for 2012 (E/ICEF/2012/3) was introduced by the Director of Policy and Practice. A report on recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit (E/ICEF/2012/4) was also included under this agenda item.

12. Delegations commended the report for being concise, comprehensive and results-focused. They praised UNICEF for its efforts to strengthen work at the country level to implement the triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for the development of the United Nations system (General Assembly resolution 62/208) and for its strong engagement in United Nations system-wide coherence. In particular, UNICEF was praised for addressing bottlenecks and making recommendations to strengthen coherence in middle-income countries and countries with a limited United Nations presence. UNICEF was also commended for its contribution to the development of the resident coordinator system and in implementing the management and accountability system, and was encouraged to engage more strongly in the "Delivering as one" process.

13. Delegations urged UNICEF to raise its level of ambition in order to impact the lives of children. In the final push to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, UNICEF was called upon to support efforts not only to achieve the Goals but to

surpass them in order to produce transformative outcomes. It was recommended that UNICEF remain focused on young child survival and development and help to reduce the contribution of diseases to child mortality to close to zero. UNICEF was also urged to support efforts to end female genital mutilation and to enhance its work with partners in education. To combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis, and to reach the Millennium Development Goals, it was noted, efforts needed to target poverty. In order to maximize results on Goal 8, it would be necessary to leverage and mobilize local resources. In all efforts, it was vital to empower individuals and communities. One delegation requested that the preliminary outcomes of a survey on the equity focus in UNICEF activities be included in the next annual report to the Economic and Social Council.

14. Noting that children and youth have much at stake in the Rio+20 Conference, delegations said that UNICEF had to involve itself deeply in the process leading up to the conference, engaging with the Executive Board on how salient issues can be addressed. It was proposed that a thematic discussion be held on sustainable development.

15. On gender, delegations welcomed the full implementation of the gender equality marker and the e-learning course developed with other United Nations partners. It was noted that UNICEF had been successful in mainstreaming gender issues in humanitarian settings. UNICEF was commended for its collaboration with the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and was asked how this could be further improved. One delegation requested that forthcoming reports show more clearly the achievements made in gender equality on the ground.

16. A number of delegations highlighted the importance of South-South and triangular cooperation. One requested that UNICEF devise a strategy for implementing the recommendation of the Joint Inspection Unit to allocate 0.5 per cent of core resources to South-South cooperation.

17. Enthusiastic support was expressed for the efforts of UNICEF to bring more innovation to its partnerships and operations in order to achieve equity. This, it was said, should lead to helping children survive and thrive.

18. Several suggestions were made to take a more strategic approach to partnerships. These included supporting innovative efforts to fight human trafficking and to end violence against women and children, and to continue work with public and non-public sectors to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

19. Several delegations, welcoming continued partnership with the international financial institutions, enquired about collaboration with the World Bank in fragile and conflict-affected countries. One recommended that the partnership include the strengthening of State capacities in violence prevention and security of citizens, particularly in countries in Latin America. The same delegation called for a strengthening of bilateral and regional cooperation mechanisms.

20. Regarding partnerships with the private sector, UNICEF was asked about its involvement in the child rights and business principles initiative and was encouraged to forge new partnerships with the private sector, non-traditional donors and emerging economies to broaden its base of support.

21. It was noted by some delegations that UNICEF and its partners needed to weave middle-income countries into a comprehensive vision of development. Rather than simply observing graduation thresholds, this would require a more complex analysis of issues such as poverty, disease and violence in those countries.

22. Delegations underscored the importance of capacity-building to achieving sustainable development and to maintaining national ownership and leadership. Several delegations emphasized the need for a more systematic, holistic approach to capacity development, with a special focus on analysing context-specific gaps, bottlenecks and barriers.

23. Also stressed was the importance of strengthening monitoring and evaluation to achieve equity. Delegations recommended that baseline data and systematic monitoring and evaluation mechanisms be emphasized in country programmes as a way to assess outcomes and impact. In this regard, they said, it was important to strengthen national capacity-building related to country-led monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. It was also necessary, according to some, to involve children in monitoring and evaluation, so that they could provide input into programmes. One delegation enquired about implementation of the eight corporate evaluations planned by UNICEF and how the Executive Board would be involved in discussion of the recommendations of the evaluations.

24. Delegations emphasized that capacity development should be at the core of transition and peacebuilding efforts. In the transition from relief to development, it was recommended that greater support be given to vulnerable States facing the effects of climate change and a precarious environmental situation, in cooperation with other United Nations entities. One delegation said it would be helpful to hear periodic discussions on humanitarian issues at the meetings of the Executive Board. UNICEF was encouraged to play an active role in improving the cluster approach within the framework of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) and to be a constructive partner within the IASC towards improving coordination in humanitarian situations.

25. Other areas requiring the strengthened focus of UNICEF were the participation of girls and boys in planning and evaluating programmes, the emerging youth bulge in developing countries and reaching children with disabilities and other vulnerable and marginalized children and youths.

26. Delegations commended UNICEF for being able to raise contributions to resources in a time of economic crisis. Nevertheless, they recognized the pressing need for increased support for regular resources, the flexible and predictable funding base for UNICEF. Donors were urged to increase their contributions to regular resources. Speakers cautioned that measures to promote cost-efficiency should improve efficiency and equity but should not diminish programming.

27. Turning to the road map towards an integrated budget, delegations recommended that a strong connection be made between objectives and processes on the one hand and results and outcomes on the other.

28. Delegations praised the efforts made to harmonize business practices, including cash transfers and country-level procurement. It was noted, however, that simplification and harmonization across United Nations entities should take into account the mandates of the funds and programmes. UNICEF was encouraged to work with its United Nations partners in further reducing transaction costs. It was

emphasized, however, that harmonization was a means, not an end, in achieving results for children.

29. In recruitment of staff, delegations stressed the need for wide geographical representation and a focus on gender equality and the advancement of women.

30. One delegation encouraged UNICEF to continue to refine the road map towards the UNICEF medium-term strategic plan (MTSP) for 2014-2107 (E/ICEF/2012/5) in line with the process for the QCPR in 2012-2013, major international conferences, including the upcoming Rio+20 Conference and the post-2015 development framework.

31. Expressing its appreciation to UNICEF and its partners for their humanitarian assistance, including in Somalia and the wider Horn of Africa region, the Group of African States called on UNICEF and the entire United Nations system to take action on the impending crisis in West Africa's Sahel region.

32. The Director of Policy and Practice agreed with the comments made, addressing several specific questions. He described a number of areas in which UNICEF worked with the World Bank in fragile States, including through post-conflict and post-disaster needs assessments, and he noted the renewed focus of UNICEF on capacity development in transition, recovery and peacebuilding. On the child rights and business principles initiative, he said that UNICEF would follow up in several ways, including through development of key performance indicators and embedding the principles into existing frameworks. He described the way UNICEF would continue to support South-South cooperation, especially at the country programme level. UNICEF was also strengthening evaluation across the organization, particularly in support of the Monitoring Results for Equity System. In response to a request by one delegation, he described several areas in which UNICEF and its partners were enhancing collaboration with UN-Women, at the global and field levels.

33. The Executive Director thanked delegations for their comments, responding to a number of them specifically. He underlined the importance of raising the ambitions of UNICEF to higher levels, along with results attained. This was important for achieving the Millennium Development Goals and developing sustainable development goals. He underlined the critical need for a response to the impending crisis in the Sahel, which highlighted the challenges faced by fragile States. He said that UNICEF involvement in middle-income countries, going beyond formulas, was very much on the agenda for 2012 and that the Internet and information and communications technology would help stimulate more South-South cooperation. He said that UNICEF was working with its partners to increase the speed and flexibility with which the United Nations system responds to emergencies and support the IASC reforms. He emphasized that UNICEF and its partners would work on delivering as one and on harmonizing business practices as cost-effectively and efficiently as possible. It was essential, he said, to make these work.

34. The Director of the Division of Governance, United Nations and Multilateral Affairs addressed the comments on harmonization and United Nations coherence. She emphasized that it was important to continue to demonstrate faster achievement of development results and cost savings; to reduce the time spent on processes; to improve transparency and fund allocation; to enhance mutual accountability for

results; and to improve common results-based management practices. She also underlined the need for a speedier and fuller implementation of the management and accountability system and a faster sharing of good practices. She closed by saying that it was essential to ensure that funding remained focused on programming and what matters to deliver results for children.

35. The Executive Director thanked the donors for their support and praised the work of the National Committees for UNICEF and of the national and international staff who work in emergencies and dangerous situations throughout the world.

36. The Executive Board adopted decision 2012/1 (see annex).

B. Road map towards the medium-term strategic plan for 2014-2017

37. The Deputy Executive Director for Programmes made some introductory remarks. She noted that the need for input and collaboration on the development of MTSP for 2014-2017 was especially important because strategic priorities were being decided upon in a very complex, rapidly changing environment. UNICEF wanted to benefit from the collective expertise and experience of Member States, United Nations agencies and other organizations, particularly in the development of the corporate results framework. It was proposed to hold a workshop through the Bureau of the Executive Board in late March 2012, at which time a plan would be shared for additional consultations.

38. The next MTSP, she said, would set ambitious goals and new standards for performance. It would have a clear focus on helping countries achieve results for the most disadvantaged and vulnerable children and families in order to make an impact on children's lives. The aim was to achieve the Millennium Development Goal targets that remain to be met while laying a foundation for a post-2015 development agenda that upholds children's rights and well-being as the centrepiece for growth.

39. The Director of Policy and Practice presented the report (E/ICEF/2012/5). He emphasized that the formulation of the next MTSP would take into account the evolving nature and outcomes of the intergovernmental discussions on QCPR, the Rio+20 Conference and other conferences and outcomes, as well as relevant international commitments. As part of the consultation process, he said, UNICEF would also be undertaking a review of the major challenges faced by children around the world, now and as foreseen in the future.

40. Commenting that the road map was a "living document", to be regularly reviewed and updated, delegations welcomed the emphasis given to the consultative process with Executive Board members. Some requested further details on consultations. One delegation said that discussions also needed to take place on the linkages between the priorities of the plan and the outcomes and outputs; on baselines and measurable indicators; and on how to strengthen analytical results reporting. Moreover, it was expected that UNICEF, the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Population Fund would coordinate and harmonize their approaches. Nevertheless, as delegations noted, UNICEF had to retain its comparative advantages and clear mandate.

41. UNICEF was called upon to continue its tradition of being ambitious for children. Rather than business as usual, transformative steps were needed to change fundamental conditions for children. Highlighting the importance of the equity

approach, delegations recommended that the next MTSP contribute to sustainable development and be based on the Convention on the Rights of the Child. It was recommended that gender equality and the human rights-based approach should apply to all indicators, goals and programmes. In addition, humanitarian issues needed to be mainstreamed into all priority areas, and emphasis given to the protection of children from violence, abuse and exploitation. It was important, they said, that UNICEF take on a leadership role for these issues.

42. A number of other issues were cited as being essential to the next MTSP. These included cross-cutting issues such as gender equality, United Nations coherence, assistance to middle-income countries, engagement with fragile States, and South-South and triangular cooperation.

43. Delegations called for a strong results framework and Integrated Monitoring and Evaluation Framework and an independent evaluation function with sufficient resources. The results framework needed to be robust and demonstrate a complete results chain with expected results at all levels, allowing UNICEF to systematically report on its progress and achievements. UNICEF was requested to hold regular sessions with Executive Board members on methodology, including measurable indicators, and on the format for results management and reporting, and to give informal presentations of its draft results framework at the first regular session and annual session of 2013. UNICEF was further requested to provide information on how it plans to integrate evaluative information into the results framework and to clarify the rationale for allocating resources to the key result areas and focus areas. Several questions were raised on how the new plan would take advantage of MoRES.

44. It was recommended that UNICEF leverage the resources, knowledge and institutions in programme countries, making capacity-strengthening a priority, including in middle-income countries.

45. The Executive Director emphasized that the development of the next MTSP was the foundation of the work of UNICEF. The new plan, he said, would be rights-based and focused on the equity strategy. UNICEF was eager to engage in consultations with the Executive Board and others. The process would reflect the involvement of UNICEF in the QCPR process, the post-2015 agenda and what the Secretary-General termed the "Strategic Development Goals". He noted that South-South and triangular cooperation represented important opportunities for collaboration among UNICEF and its partners. Explaining that MoRES was still being rolled out, he stressed that it would help UNICEF and partners to identify and act on bottlenecks in the collective pursuit of results for children.

46. The Director of Policy and Practice said that the comments shared would be reflected in the development of the next MTSP. He noted that the secretariat would provide Executive Board members with further details on consultations regarding the plan and its results framework.

47. The Executive Board adopted decision 2012/2 (see annex).

C. Oral report on UNICEF follow-up to recommendations and decisions of the UNAIDS Programme Coordinating Board meetings; and thematic discussion and lessons learned in the medium-term strategic plan focus area 3: HIV/AIDS and children

48. The Chief of the HIV/AIDS Section made a combined presentation on the two topics. Background documents were available for the oral report (E/ICEF/2012/CRP.4) and the thematic discussion (E/ICEF/2012/CRP.6).

49. Delegations acknowledged the leadership of UNICEF in combating AIDS and in prevention of mother-to-child transmission (PMTCT) of HIV, saying that the organization's investments in the global AIDS response contributed to mitigating the impact of the pandemic on children and their families. Noting that there remained a significant need for scaling up efforts to eliminate mother-to-child transmission and to provide access to treatment for children living with HIV, some delegations encouraged UNICEF to further align HIV/AIDS programme planning with the process of formulating the next MTSP. Others urged UNICEF to take into consideration poverty and other development issues that affected rates of HIV infection. Some asked for clarification of the linkages between the UNAIDS strategy and the outcome of the 2011 High-level Meeting of the General Assembly on AIDS, of accountability in meeting strategy targets and of programmatic interventions such as cash transfers. Several delegations, noting that UNICEF key result areas on AIDS were part of the UNAIDS strategy, stated that the new division of labour promised greater coordination at the country level. Some noted with concern worrying figures related to HIV infection rates among young people and alarming high rates of sexual violence among girls in sub-Saharan Africa.

50. A number of delegations made comments on UNICEF involvement with UNAIDS. These included aligning gender equality with the UNAIDS strategy, clarifying the UNICEF roles within: the Global Plan Towards the Elimination of New HIV Infections among Children by 2015 and Keeping Their Mothers Alive initiated in 2011, aligning the next MTSP with the Unified Budget, Results and Accountability Framework and strengthening accountability in achieving results. Delegations urged UNICEF to focus especially on prevention in adolescents, on integrating PMTCT in maternal and child health programming, on strengthening community involvement, on scaling up efforts promoting male circumcision and on integration of HIV interventions in humanitarian responses.

51. Delegations noted with appreciation that the organization's work on children and AIDS was consistent with its equity approach, highlighting particularly the achievements in PMTCT, but various delegations noted with concern the low rate of increase in coverage in paediatric treatment. Some requested clarification of past programming to assess trends, linkages to current priorities and recommendations for future programming, including possible new indicators in the focus area. Others queried the reliability of reported data on trends and risk behaviours, on the impact of the new guidance on gender equality on HIV/AIDS programming and its integration in emergency response. One delegation urged UNICEF to focus efforts on most-at-risk adolescents, instead of taking a generalized approach, to make interventions aimed at preventing HIV among young people more cost-effective.

52. Several delegations reported on national efforts to reduce HIV infections, particularly among youth, and urged UNICEF to increase support for regional

efforts, including in HIV prevention, universal access to AIDS treatment, lowering drug costs, and education efforts to counter stigma and discrimination.

53. In response, the Chief of the HIV/AIDS Section said that UNICEF was intensifying its efforts in prevention, particularly with adolescents, targeting populations most at risk. He expressed confidence in the trends indicated by data, as HIV was an area where intensive efforts over the last decade had improved surveillance, monitoring and evaluation. Highlighting the global partnerships with the UNAIDS co-sponsors and secretariat, with the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria and with the United States President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), he noted that UNICEF is committed to supporting the implementation of the HIV/AIDS investment framework and to ensure that HIV programmes are linked to broader poverty reduction, equity, gender equality and rights-based initiatives. He reminded delegations that UNICEF is working across sectors and with other organizations on integrating PMTCT and paediatric treatment into routine and maternal and child health programmes. He went on to say that UNICEF, within the structure of the Global Plan, co-chairs with the World Health Organization the Inter-Agency Task Team. This Task Team supports implementation of the Global Plan and is responsible for technical support, coordination, monitoring of country progress, and development and implementation of guidance. He concluded by assuring delegations all requests for clarification were well noted and promised to follow up bilaterally with delegations.

54. The Executive Director noted that, compared with global efforts on HIV/AIDS crises of a decade ago, the international community had come a long way, especially in the emphasis on PMTCT and increasing coverage for children. He said he believed the innovations in diagnostics and treatment would accelerate progress towards the Global Plan by 2015 and the goal of achieving an AIDS-free generation.

D. Harnessing knowledge to achieve results for children

55. The Deputy Executive Director for Programmes introduced the agenda item, and the Director, Office of Research, presented the report (E/ICEF/2012/6).

56. Delegations expressed their strong support for the broad strategies in research and knowledge management outlined in the report. Many delegations requested that, as a follow-up to the discussion of strategies, the Executive Board be presented, in the near future, with a plan of work, proposing resource needs and timelines. This plan would outline how the strategies could be put into practice and integrated into the work of UNICEF. Several delegations noted the need for regular funding in support of research and knowledge management, and encouraged UNICEF to integrate the new research framework into the next MTSP.

57. A number of delegations affirmed as important the emphasis on building an evidence base at the country level and to create linkages between research and programming and advocacy. Several delegations said the research results should be applied to support the UNICEF equity strategy and other important areas in child development and protection, as well as increasing the evidence base for effective humanitarian action. Some urged UNICEF to pay special attention to accelerating the dissemination of research results and to establish a "reality check" on research bias so that internationally funded research priorities are aligned with a country's development needs. Others noted the importance of strengthening linkages between

knowledge functions within UNICEF as well as among United Nations organizations, in order to make "Delivering as one" more timely and effective and to build and strengthen the capacity of national and international institutions.

58. Several delegations asked about UNICEF priorities in knowledge management, constraints and challenges in gaining support from stakeholders, both within UNICEF and beyond, and the process for adopting the strategic agenda. Others inquired about the envisioned role of UNICEF within the knowledge-sharing strategies and research platforms of the United Nations system, including compatibility challenges and synergies with other agencies. One delegation proposed having regular thematic debates or round tables on research relevant to UNICEF at Executive Board meetings, while another encouraged the development of innovative research approaches, such as participative methods involving children as research agents.

59. In response, the Deputy Executive Director clarified that the emphasis on country-led research was to provide a reality check that ensured research agendas were aligned with a country's development needs. She noted that research data was being generated by many different parts of UNICEF and that, moving forward, the challenge was to maximize the synthesis of the data as evidence and sharing the results with the organization's various partners.

60. The Director noted with appreciation the strong support of delegations for the proposed strategies as well as the widespread request to follow up the report with a plan of action. He agreed that it was important to make research available in timely and effective ways, and pointed to the experience of the World Bank. He noted that close collaboration with national research centres provided a critical voice and reality check on bias in research and, more fundamentally, in setting development agendas. Emphasizing the "whole child" approach as the special contribution of UNICEF, he stressed the importance of creating effective linkages at all levels, including through improved communication strategies aimed at those working in the field and in humanitarian emergencies. He affirmed that the research and knowledge management framework could be completed before the end of the year, and that it was the firm intention of UNICEF to have research and knowledge management well integrated into the next MTSP.

61. The Executive Board adopted decision 2012/3 (see annex).

E. UNICEF programme cooperation

1. Approval of revised country programme document discussed at the second regular session of 2011

62. In accordance with Executive Board decisions 2002/4 and 2006/19, the Executive Board approved, on a no-objection basis, revised country programme documents (CPDs) for Algeria, Brazil, Cape Verde, Dominican Republic, Guyana, Islamic Republic of Iran, Malawi, Mozambique, Papua New Guinea, Peru, Panama, Suriname, Thailand, Viet Nam and Yemen.

2. Draft country programme documents

63. In accordance with its decision 2011/16, the Executive Board, approved, on an exceptional basis, the country programme document for the Republic of South

Sudan (E/ICEF/2012/P/L.1 and Corr.1). Executive Board members had discussed the draft CPD at an informal consultation on 19 December 2011. A revised document was posted on the UNICEF website within three weeks of the consultation.

64. Delegations stressed the need for a consistent approach to humanitarian assistance, recovery and development, integrating a gender perspective, and encouraged strong cooperation among all international and local partners under the leadership of the national Government. Noting the volatile situation, with forced migration and internal displacement, delegations underlined the importance of risk assessment and mitigation and of cooperating closely with the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) and humanitarian organizations. They urged UNICEF to strengthen its cluster coordination and leadership, particularly in addressing the situation of returnees, maternal mortality, primary education and child protection. They noted that adequate core and human resources, along with careful prioritization and proper risk analysis, were urgently needed to tackle the multiple complex emergencies in the fragile State.

65. Emphasizing capacity-building as an urgent need, delegations noted with appreciation that the country programme was aligned with the United Nations Development Assistance Framework and national priorities. They stressed that it was crucial that the United Nations deliver as one but also that UNICEF, given the humanitarian challenges, find flexible solutions adapted to the local conditions. The stakes were high to deliver peace dividends quickly, they said. One delegation reported on its provincial-level pilots in health and in teacher training, and urged UNICEF to support their scale-up.

66. In response, the Regional Director for Eastern and Southern Africa confirmed that contingency plans and partnerships were in place to deal with returnees, and focused on women and girls, who were the most vulnerable. The programme aimed to build capacity while adapting to an evolving situation, he said, and would provide the base for a longer-term programme. Acknowledging the need for a complex programme with margins of flexibility, he noted that emergency risk management was integrated into all programming. He affirmed that UNICEF would partner with UNMISS and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, and align its programmes to strengthen national leadership.

67. The Executive Board adopted decision 2012/4 (see annex).

3. Extensions of ongoing country programmes

68. In accordance with decision 2009/11 the Executive Board was informed of the extension of Eritrea country programme that was approved by the Executive Director.

69. The Executive Board adopted decision 2012/5 (see annex).

F. Private fund-raising: 2012 workplan and proposed budget

70. The Director of the Division of Private Fundraising and Partnerships (PFP) presented the report (E/ICEF/2012/AB/L.1).

71. Delegations commended the fund-raising efforts of UNICEF and the National Committees for UNICEF, recognizing their hard work accomplished in a challenging economic environment, faced with greater competition for private donor funds. Many highlighted the stabilization of income for regular resources and but also noted with concern the low contribution rate of sales income from cards and products. Delegations commended the recently completed rationalization of the cards and products business, noting that hard decisions had had to be made to consolidate funding and to position UNICEF for future growth. Noting the importance of private sector fund-raising for the future, several delegations praised the organization's efforts to identify innovative ways to raise additional funds and retain donors. Others wished to learn more about the new income-generation strategy, including timelines for its implementation, and about how UNICEF worked together with other United Nations funds and programmes.

72. Some expressed concern over the high expenses in sales of cards and products, and wished to see the results of the rationalization, including a cost-benefit analysis. Others urged UNICEF to shift its brand base from the sale of consumer products to other innovative kinds of giving, including regular pledge donations, licensing agreements and digital and social media strategies. Several delegations focused on the development of corporate engagement and asked to learn more about the collaboration with the Global Compact, particularly on corporate social responsibility.

73. The Chairperson of the Standing Group of National Committees reported on the most recent activities in private fund-raising and advocacy. She noted that, despite unforeseen challenges, a significant increase in regular resources funding was now forecast. She noted that the joint process of aligning common strategic intentions was supported by the forthcoming global communication strategy and the new research function of UNICEF. She said she hoped the decrease in investment funds as a cost-cutting measure was only temporary, as it signified cutting future income.

74. In response, the Director said that the rationalization process was extensive, involving significant one-time costs. She noted that the revitalized cards and products business was not solely about generation of income but also about maintaining the reputation of UNICEF. She reported that the growth strategy was projecting a gradual recovery in net income for 2012. The business model had been revisited, she said, with greater focus being placed on innovative ways of reaching out, including through pledge and digital strategies, to mobilize resources and to raise awareness of children's rights and the work of UNICEF. On the future direction of fund-raising efforts, she noted that the organization planned to take stock, in consultation with the family of National Committees, of successful income-generation strategies and consolidate them in the next integrated private sector income-generation strategy for 2014-2017. As part of the new strategy, UNICEF would continue the emphasis on brand equity and brand awareness in engaging foundations and the corporate world, including through the corporate social responsibility principles being finalized with the Global Compact. These innovative efforts, she acknowledged, would require investments in capacity-building, both within UNICEF and in support of national and civil society partners.

75. The Executive Board adopted decision 2012/6 (see annex).

G. Oral briefing on challenges and progress in addressing the issue of high vacancy rates

76. The oral briefing and the background note (E/ICEF/2012/CRP.5) were introduced by the Deputy Executive Director for Management and presented by the Director of the Division of Human Resources, a.i.

77. The Deputy Executive Director explained that in addressing vacancy rates, UNICEF was following the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity while paying due regard to wide geographical representation and gender parity.

78. The Director, a.i., noted that the vacancy rate of 18 per cent cited in the report of the Board of Auditors (A/65/5/Add.2) had included posts that had been established but not yet funded and that recruitment could begin only once a post was funded. The more meaningful measure, she said, was the fillable vacancy rate, the total number of established funded posts not filled. This rate for UNICEF was now 5 per cent, a figure in keeping with United Nations common standards and with the industry standard.

79. Nevertheless, she said, UNICEF had been working hard to reduce vacancy rates, especially that of 9 per cent of international posts. In the short term, efforts had focused on such measures as online recruitment and on special emergency recruitment measures introduced at the end of 2010. When surge capacity was needed for emergencies, UNICEF reassigned staff for immediate short-term emergency response and conducted fast recruitment for longer-term emergency staff. Together, these measures had reduced overall average recruitment time across all posts from 137 days in 2008 to 101 days by the end of 2011. UNICEF was also piloting approaches such as a Direct Selection Approach, based on generic descriptions of vacancies, which would allow for significant reduction of recruitment time, while preserving quality and diversity.

80. Delegations commented that UNICEF had set a good example that could be followed by other United Nations organizations. It was important, they said, to maintain a balance between speed of recruitment and the selection of highly qualified candidates, to maintain diversity and to further shorten recruitment time.

81. UNICEF was asked how it planned to address unfunded positions and to communicate results in the future, including challenges in recruitment. It was also important, delegations said, to continue to strengthen capacity to support cross-cutting areas such as gender equality.

82. One delegation enquired whether UNICEF was aiming to set a specific vacancy rate. The delegation asked whether the e-recruitment had improved representation of developing countries among the staff members. Similarly, another delegation enquired whether connectivity was universally available and how UNICEF was working to overcome any challenges in this area. Regarding recruitment for emergencies, UNICEF was asked whether the current average time of 28 days was too long.

83. The Director, a.i., replied that UNICEF did not have a planned vacancy rate, though there had been some discussion on that issue. She said that the e-recruitment system did have a special facility to help candidates having problems with remote access. Whether e-recruitment had opened access to candidates from programme countries had not yet been ascertained; however, 20 per cent of first-time international Professionals had come from the cadre of national officers in 2011.

84. Turning to the question of whether 28 days for emergency recruitment was too long, she said that the majority of surge deployments took place in 20 days or fewer and that UNICEF would like to reduce that time even further. UNICEF had established immediate response teams (IRTs), which would allow deployment to take place within 48 hours.

85. She explained the talent pool and fast track processes. Noting that UNICEF closely tracked gender parity, she said that UNICEF had reached an overall percentage of 48 for female staff. The aim of reaching 50/50 parity was expected to be reached in about three years.

86. In response to a question from one delegation, the Deputy Executive Director for Management briefly explained the issue of unfunded positions.

87. The Executive Director of UNICEF noted that drawing on the talent pool of national staff was a high priority for the organization. In addition to using e-recruitment, this included helping prospective candidates to engage in such activities as developing resumes and practising interviews, and providing national staff with access to a range of training opportunities.

88. Regarding emergencies, he said that in the case of a level-3 emergency, for example, UNICEF would make IRTs available for duty within 48 hours and would deploy other personnel as quickly as possible as a matter of organizational priority.

H. Pledging event

89. The Executive Director introduced the thirteenth annual pledging event, expressing gratitude to partners who have sustained or even expanded support for the work of UNICEF during times of economic challenge. He said that inadequate regular resources presented a serious challenge to the organization, as these resources were the bedrock of the organization. He urged donors to increase their contributions to regular resources so that UNICEF could continue to meet its commitment to protect children's rights and improve children's lives, maintain its global presence, respond effectively to emergencies and promote equity.

90. The representatives of 14 Governments pledged their support for UNICEF, with 12 of them indicating specific amounts. The total amount pledged during the event was $173 million.[1]

91. Delegations emphasized the importance of regular resources to the work of UNICEF. Lamenting the downward trend in contributions to core resources, especially in relation to total income, they called upon donors to increase their contributions to this stable and predictable funding base of UNICEF.

92. The Director of the Office of Public-sector Alliances and Resource Mobilization expressed gratitude to the Governments that pledged their support, which was vital to enable UNICEF to continue its work, especially in emergency and humanitarian contexts and countries in fragile situations.

[1] For details of Government contributions to regular resources pledged or paid for 2011, and indicative figures for 2012, see "UNICEF regular resources: pledges for 2012" (E/ICEF/2012/CRP.2) on the UNICEF Executive Board website. Contributions also include pledges received during the 2011 United Nations Pledging Conference in November 2011 and those received outside of pledging events. As at 9 February 2012, UNICEF had received total pledges of $182 million for regular resources in 2012 from 36 Governments.

93. The Executive Director closed the discussion by thanking those Governments that pledged contributions during the year — including established donors and Governments where UNICEF has programmes. He said UNICEF would use the resources in the most efficient and cost-effective way possible — with a singular focus on results.

I. Oral update on the implementation of the International Public Sector Accounting Standards (IPSAS)

94. The update was given by the Deputy Director, Budget, Division of Financial and Administrative Management. She summarized the activities and progress in the four areas of transition: policy development, change management, system development and report preparation.

95. Delegations expressed appreciation for the timely implementation of IPSAS in accordance with the report of the Secretary-General A/60/846/Add.3 and Executive Board decision 2009/7. They also commended UNICEF for the way in which IPSAS was being rolled out, including through training provided at the country office level. They requested that implementation of IPSAS be flexible on the ground so that countries could undertake any necessary internal changes in their procedures. It would be important, they said, not to jeopardize implementation of country programmes. UNICEF was asked about possible recommendations of the Board of Auditors predicated upon implementation of IPSAS and whether UNICEF was planning to have a central support centre for IPSAS implementation similar to that of UNDP.

96. The Comptroller assured delegations that implementation of IPSAS would not jeopardize or undermine programme implementation and would, in fact, enhance the management of resources by field offices. He explained that the UNICEF adoption of IPSAS does not affect the accounting systems of Government partners or other counterparts, regardless of the accounting standards they use. He said that UNICEF does not anticipate having a central service centre for IPSAS implementation, as the organization already manages revenue recognition and procurement centrally, and that human resources at country offices had been trained to be able to manage information regarding assets.

97. The Executive Director thanked the UNICEF team responsible for IPSAS implementation, commending them on a job well done.

J. Other matters

98. The secretariat shared with the Executive Board the list of provisional agenda items for the annual session of 2012.

Thematic discussion on the global progress evaluation of the Education in Emergencies and Post-Crisis Transition programme

99. The Director, Evaluation, made introductory remarks on the evaluation and the Associate Director, Education, introduced the topic. A background document (E/ICEF/2012/CRP.6) was available for information.

100. Delegations said they appreciated the findings, highlighting the importance of education in helping societies return to normality after complex crises. They commended the essential role of UNICEF in emergencies and post-conflict situations. Many delegations noted the relevance of the lessons learned, not only for the new programme on peacebuilding and education, but also for the organization's general education work in fragile States. This included the role of UNICEF as a co-lead of the humanitarian education cluster, which some said could serve as a model for United Nations partnerships with non-governmental organizations in other clusters. Others praised the evaluation as a tool for improving the implementation of a rights-based approach to UNICEF work in the field, particularly in monitoring, evidence-based policy development, management and innovation. Some emphasized the need to address gender-based and sexual violence and strengthen gender equality in education as part of peacebuilding. Observations were also made on education in emergencies and the requirement for flexible funding, on the need to take into account gender equality and children with disabilities, adapting quality education models (such as child-friendly schools), preparedness in risk-prone countries, as well as the role of UNICEF within the Global Partnership for Education.

101. Several delegations highlighted the need for joint efforts at all levels to strengthen education in peacebuilding and disaster risk reduction, underscoring the importance of deploying qualified and experienced personnel in humanitarian emergencies. Delegations also emphasized the importance of consulting with affected countries during all stages in the transition from relief to recovery to development and in order to promote reconciliation and conflict prevention.

102. In response, the Deputy Executive Director for External Affairs thanked Executive Board members for their comments and noted that the organization's work in education in emergencies was central to the UNICEF equity agenda. The Director, Evaluation, stressed that the discussion showed that evaluations had as much to do with accountability as with learning lessons, noting that incorporating "evaluability assessments" into programme design strengthened implementation from the beginning. The Associate Director, Education, acknowledged that UNICEF recognized that it needed to continue addressing gender issues and gender-based violence in its work on education. Noting that UNICEF used emergencies as opportunities to advocate on behalf of girls and other vulnerable children, she affirmed that a crucial focus was on strengthening the resilience of communities and protecting schools.

103. The Executive Director concluded by saying that UNICEF was one of the few organizations working in all three phases (emergency response, recovery and development) and that UNICEF must continue to integrate and anticipate each next phase while working closely with Governments and focusing on national capacity development.

K. Adoption of draft decisions

104. The Executive Board adopted decisions 2012/1 through 2012/6 (see annex).

L. Closing statements by the Executive Director and the President

105. The Executive Director, in his closing remarks, said he was struck by the spirit of openness at the meetings, which included frank discussions on achievements as well as areas for improvement in implementing the UNICEF programmes. He noted that the substantive discussions had produced many good ideas. They reflected a growing sense of mutual confidence and transparency between the secretariat of UNICEF and the Executive Board. This was particularly important in the lead-up to the QCPR and the next MTSP, as well as the Rio+20 Conference and beyond.

106. In conclusion, the President highlighted the Executive Director's call for innovation with a focus on equity. He noted that funding remained a central challenge and was a key consideration in balancing the two central objectives of UNICEF: to become more cost-effective and efficient while maintaining the ability to deliver in programme countries. He said that the willingness to engage in dialogue and partnership bodes well for UNICEF as it moves forward in fulfilling its mission for children.

107. The President welcomed Ms. Yoka Brandt as the new Deputy Executive Director for External Affairs.

Annex

Decisions adopted by the Executive Board at its first regular session of 2012

2012/1
Annual report to the Economic and Social Council

The Executive Board

1. *Takes note* of the report of UNICEF to the Economic and Social Council (E/2012/6-E/ICEF/2012/3);

2. *Encourages* UNICEF to continue enhancing its reporting, including by placing greater emphasis on challenges and trends;

3. *Decides* to transmit the above-mentioned report to the Economic and Social Council.

First regular session
10 February 2012

2012/2
Road map towards the UNICEF medium-term strategic plan for 2014-2017

The Executive Board

1. *Welcomes* the "road map towards the UNICEF medium-term strategic plan for 2014-2017" (E/ICEF/2012/5) as a living document;

2. *Takes note* of the key milestones and time frames relating to the development of the strategic plan for 2014-2017 contained therein;

3. In line with Executive Board decision 2011/12, *requests* UNICEF to include in the road map specific actions and details of the opportunities for consultation towards the development of the strategic plan results framework;

4. *Encourages* UNICEF to strengthen consultations with other relevant United Nations entities pertinent to its mandate on strategic planning, results, and monitoring and evaluation frameworks, with a view to building on best practices and lessons learned;

5. *Requests* the Executive Director of UNICEF to continue to update and consult with the Executive Board on progress as foreseen in the road map, and in this regard, requests an updated version of the road map to be made available by June 2012;

6. *Looks forward* to further consultations on the road map, as appropriate.

First regular session
10 February 2012

2012/3
Harnessing knowledge to achieve results for children

The Executive Board

1. *Welcomes* the proposals included in the strategic integrated framework for research and knowledge management, including (a) its three strategic priorities, namely, building the evidence base for results for children; putting countries at the centre of knowledge gathering and use; strengthening linkages between knowledge functions, and topics and levels of the organization; (b) the associated key results sought; and (c) the additional suggested ideas and directions;

2. *Recognizes* the organizational steps being proposed, which are (a) clarifying the functions of the Office of Research, (b) putting in place processes for setting priorities, (c) changing incentives, (d) working with information technology, and (e) ensuring adequate resources;

3. *Encourages* UNICEF to report to the Executive Board at its annual session of 2013 on the strategic priorities and organizational steps as well as key results set out in the framework, and in this regard, recalls its decision 2011/3 requesting UNICEF to report on concrete steps taken to improve knowledge management at headquarters and in the field;

4. *Welcomes* the proposal of UNICEF, presented in document (E/ICEF/2012/6), to translate the suggested ideas and directions into a workplan, timeline and budget;

5. *Stresses* the importance of the research function and knowledge management in the development of the new UNICEF strategic plan for 2014-2017, and encourages UNICEF to allocate adequate regular resources to reflect implementation of its strategic integrated framework.

First regular session
10 February 2012

2012/4
Country programme document for the Republic of South Sudan

The Executive Board

1. *Recalls* its decision 2011/16 to consider for approval, on an exceptional basis, the country programme document for South Sudan at the first regular session of 2012;

2. *Also recalls* that an informal consultation on the draft country programme document for the Republic of South Sudan (E/ICEF/2012/P/L.1 and Corr.1) was held on 19 December 2011;

3. *Approves* the revised country programme document for the Republic of South Sudan, with the aggregate indicative budget of $10,536,000 from regular resources, subject to the availability of funds, and $87,960,000 in other resources, subject to the availability of specific-purpose contributions, for the period 2012 to 2013.

First regular session
10 February 2012

2012/5
Extensions of ongoing country programmes

The Executive Board

Takes note of the one-year extension of the country programme for Eritrea approved by the Executive Director, as indicated in the table to document E/ICEF/2012/P/L.3.

First regular session
10 February 2012

2012/6
Private fund-raising: 2012 workplan and proposed budget

A. Private Fundraising and Partnerships budgeted expenditures for 2012 season

The Executive Board

1. *Approves* for the fiscal year 2012 (1 January to 31 December) budgeted expenditures of $130.4 million, as detailed in the table below and summarized in column I of table 3 to document E/ICEF/2012/AB/L.1.

(In millions of United States dollars)

Cost of goods and inventory overhead	12.3
Investment funds	39.0
Direct expenses (excluding cost of goods)	24.1
Indirect expenses	55.0
Total expenditures, consolidated	**130.4**

2. *Authorizes* UNICEF

(a) To incur expenditures, as summarized in column I of table 3 to document E/ICEF/2012/AB/L.1, and to increase expenditures, up to the levels indicated in columns II and III of the same table, should the apparent proceeds from fund-raising or cards and products sales increase to the levels indicated in columns II and III;

(b) To redeploy resources between the various budget lines (as detailed in paragraph 1 above), up to a maximum of 10 per cent of the amounts approved;

(c) To spend an additional amount between Executive Board sessions, when necessary, up to the amount caused by currency fluctuations, to implement the 2012 approved workplan.

B. Budgeted income for the 2012 season

The Executive Board

Notes that, for the period 1 January to 31 December 2012, Private Fundraising and Partnerships net proceeds are budgeted at $1,002 million, as shown in column 1 of table 3 to document E/ICEF/2012/AB/L.1.

C. Policy issues

The Executive Board

1. *Renews* investment funds, with $39 million established for 2012;

2. *Authorizes* UNICEF to incur expenditures in the 2012 fiscal period related to the cost of goods and inventory overhead (purchase of cards and other products) for the 2013 fiscal year, up to $12.3 million, as indicated in the Private Fundraising and Partnerships Strategic Plan 2012-2013 financial projections (table 5 to document E/ICEF/2012/AB/L.1);

3. *Approves* an interim one-month allocation for January 2013 of $13.04 million, to be absorbed in the annual Private Fundraising and Partnerships budget for 2012.

First regular session
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